



Chris Danou's Capitol Report
Recent Study Shows Benefits of Expanding Medicaid

It takes me about two and a half hours each way when commuting from my home in Trempealeau to my office at the State Capitol in Madison. For the ten years I was a law enforcement officer, I became used to a lot of windshield time so I really don't mind the drive at all. It's a scenic drive, especially this time of year with the leaves changing colors, and the drive gives me time to make phone calls to colleagues and constituents, and listen to public radio.

Public radio is an excellent resource for people in our community and across Wisconsin. The programming is unique and filled with informative stories related to governmental decisions made at the federal and state level. Just last week, I was in the car and heard a story about health care. Specifically, the story was highlighting a study that was recently done on health care since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

The research was done by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, which is an organization that's built a national reputation as being a trusted source of information in the health care industry. In an industry where it's difficult to filter through the many special interests, it's critical for us to get the facts. Health care is a growing industry that has expensive implications that impact us all as it's been a major topic of conversation during President Obama's administration. Even though the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was ruled the law of the land by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2012, there are still many people and politicians out there who don't believe the ACA can help people in Wisconsin and across the country.

Health care is a complex issue that impacts us all at various levels of government and there are basic facts in the report by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation that show the benefit to expanding Medicaid. As of April 2015, there were 21 states that had not done the expansion, including Wisconsin. Most of the states that haven't expanded Medicaid are sparsely populated states like Idaho, Oklahoma and Wyoming or southern states that aren't known for health care coverage like Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. The numbers show significant portions of the population in these states would be covered if the state expanded Medicaid in 2016.

Expanding Medicaid is a central purpose of the ACA because it's meant to provide more people with health insurance at a cheaper rate. Findings from the study show that if these 21 states had expanded Medicaid that the number of nonelderly people enrolled in Medicaid would increase by nearly 7 million and 4.3 million fewer people would be uninsured. According to the report, there would be \$472 billion more federal Medicaid spending from 2015 to 2024 and states would spend \$38 billion more on Medicaid from 2015 to 2024. Savings on reduced uncompensated care would offset between 13 and 25 percent of that additional state spending. States would also be able to realize other types of budgetary savings if they expanded Medicaid that are not included in this report. In other words, the failure to expand Medicaid means fewer people have health insurance and at a greater cost. For more information about this study, please visit: <http://kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/medicaid-enrollment-spending-growth-fy-2015-2016/>. You can also use this website as a resource for other topics and features related to health care.

It's unfortunate that our Governor and the Republican-controlled legislature has decided to put bad politics over good policy. Health care is important and we should be doing everything we can to make sure more people have coverage and at a cheaper cost. Expanding Medicaid is not just the financially responsible thing to do, it's also the right thing to do. After all, 29 other states have done so and are realizing the benefits. I hope we can put facts before politics and be the 30th state to expand Medicaid since implementation of the ACA.

